New medical students put their best faces forward

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Orientation for medical students is typically a whirlwind of learning the new spaces and faces that will be an important part of their four-year journey to becoming physicians.

Yet, recognizing new faces can be a challenge when everyone is wearing a mask as part of COVID-19 safety measures. That’s why this year’s incoming class, the Class of 2024, will be sporting a new kind of identity badge in the halls of the medical school — large lanyards with photos, names and hometowns big enough to read so they can get to know their colleagues from behind their face coverings.

“We wanted a system that made it easy to recognize a face with a name. Students will be wearing
these just for the first week to help everyone get to know each other,” said Mike Woodson, director of admissions at the School of Medicine.

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Dean Lee Hamm

This is the first class to matriculate during the pandemic, and their arrival at Tulane included staggered and socially distanced orientations, COVID testing and other precautions.

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The new class includes 190 students from a pool of nearly 13,000 hopeful applicants.

The Class of 2024 brings a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives to the Tulane community. The students range in age from 20-36, and consist of 15% non-science majors, 51% women and 18 first-generation college students. They include members of the military; Gold Awards/Eagle Scouts; athletes; culinary, visual and musical artists; and aspiring future innovators and entrepreneurs.

Before they begin their clinical rotations, the Class of 2024 will still receive a key symbol of their profession — the white coat — at a re-envisioned White Coat Ceremony in January 2021.
At the first-year orientation for the Class of 2024 at Tulane School of Medicine, "Who Dat" themed footballs were awarded to the individuals who had traveled the farthest to attend Tulane. (Photo by Mike Woodson / School of Medicine)